From the Minister’s Study

News of the day: Protests of another death of a black man at the hands of police, this time in Baltimore. Devastating earthquake and avalanche in Nepal. The Supreme Court hears the case for marriage equality. And -- I’m going to dedicate this newsletter column to the cultural trends affecting the health of religious communities, ours included. Why? In order to bring a prophetic voice for justice to the public square and to be an abiding source of compassionate response in times of disaster, our institutional health is crucial.

I’ve just returned from District Assembly, a gathering of Unitarian Universalists in the Pacific Southwest. The Rev. Scott Taylor, Director of Congregational Life Staff for the Unitarian Universalist Association, was the keynote speaker. He spoke honestly about the challenges facing religious communities in today’s society. He named some specific challenges that have a direct impact on our Unitarian Universalist congregations.

He said that the bread and butter of our membership growth has essentially gone away: the religiously wounded. With the growth of the “nones,” those who claim no religious affiliation, fewer and fewer people are seeking refuge from rigidly dogmatic religions. He also noted that we can no longer rely on the Boomer generation to slowly and incrementally increase the membership of our congregations.

Given today’s realities, we need different strategies if we are to maintain and grow our Unitarian Universalist congregations.

A recent survey by the Barna Group looked at the numbers of churched and un-churched adults in 117 U.S. cities. Tucson is the 12th highest on the un-churched list, with 48% of adults claiming no religious affiliation.

Another startling statistic is that 34% of households in Tucson earn less than $25,000 per year.

Looking at these hard realities need not be cause for despair. They are indicators that we can’t be about business as usual when it comes to how we do church in 2015 and beyond.

There is hope, according to Taylor, hope to be found in our theology of interdependence. What if we acted as if we really are interdependent with our neighboring UU congregations? What if we forged stronger institutional ties in order to share resources and reduce redundancies in meeting our common needs for programming staff and administrative support? How much greater would our capacity be? How much more effective would we be in bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice?

We’ve begun to live into our interdependence here in Southern Arizona with the establishment of the Baja 4 – a collaborative effort among our four UU congregations. The ministers are committed to regular pulpit exchanges – often enough that we feel the impact in the amount of time each of us spends in preparing sermons. The Worship Associates from UUCT and Mountain Vista in Northwest Tucson have arranged a lay sermon pulpit swap, which means our summer schedules are already filled. We’re also committed to developing common themes for our four congregations in order to facilitate the sharing of program materials, Covenant Circles, for example. The Baja 4 coordinating committee has chosen three priorities to work on together: a common event calendar and website, an annual meeting of the four congregations’ leadership, and cooperative education/training.

The times in which we live are challenging and exciting, offering new possibilities for strengthening, deepening, and widening our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Yours in the journey,
Rev. Diane
Upcoming Services

Sunday, May 10 10:30 am
Self Discovery

Guest Speakers: The Coming of Age Scholarly Group: Tristan Backues, Ahshlynn Berndt, Karina Eberlein, Gabriel Martin, Michael Olivares, Zoe Speer

The Coming of Age Scholarly Group has been on a voyage of self discovery this year to develop personal credos that will guide their futures. In this service the youth will present those credos to the congregation.

Worship Associate: Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Music: Desert Chorale and Leeza Beriyeva

Sunday, May 17 10:30 a.m.
Sacred Journeys

Rev. Diane Dowgiert and Kathleen Hogue

We’ll gather as an entire intergenerational community to dedicate children who are new to the congregation and to celebrate our high school youth who are making the transition to adulthood. These sacred journeys affirm the importance of our faith community in nurturing children, youth, and families.

Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Sunday, May 24 10:30 a.m.
Celeste Rogers

Worship Associate: Brian Moon
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Wednesday, May 27 7:00 p.m.

Rev. Diane Dowgiert, Kathleen Hogue, Brian Moon, and Mary Wiese

Mid-week Alternative Worship
A time to be together in story, ritual, and song.

Sunday, May 31 10:30 a.m.
Moral Injury

Rev. Diane Dowgiert

As a society, we’ve become more and more aware of the hidden injuries endured by our war veterans and the psychological realities of post-traumatic stress. Religious leaders are noting another type of hidden injury that occurs when war dictates actions that run counter to personal moral codes. Today we’ll consider how we as a religious community might respond as a place for the healing of moral injuries.

Worship Associate: Michelle Maliniak
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Sunday, June 7 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Mistakes, Imperfections, and Self-Acceptance

It’s been said that perfect is the enemy of the good. That doesn’t prevent perfectionism from rearing its ugly head. What does our faith tradition have to teach us about being good enough?

Worship Associate: Bid Romans
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Foundations of Lay Leadership

The Leadership Development Team will conduct a workshop Saturday May 9 from 9:00 am - 2:00 pm at UUCT. All members and friends of the congregation are invited to attend. Newly elected Board and Committee members are urged to attend in order to prepare themselves for the coming church year. Activities and discussion will focus on leadership skills, leadership sensibilities, and leadership as spiritual development. Snacks, drinks and child care will be available, but attendees will need to bring a brown bag lunch as we will meet over the lunch hour.

Please RSVP to Carolyn Saunders, c_saunders1@msn.com or 299-3854, or to the UUCT office, office@uuctucson.org or 748-1551. If you need child care, contact Heather Reed, hreed@uuctucson.org, to arrange this.

Staff Appreciation Day

THANK YOU to each and every one of you who donated to the Staff Appreciation Day. We appreciate your generosity and kindness.

With Love,
UUCT Staff

Annual Meeting results

We had our Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 3rd after the service. The congregation voted and all items on the agenda, including the next fiscal year’s budget, were approved. For more detailed info, please read the Annual Meeting documents in the Member’s section of the UUCT website. After the Board of Trustee’s next meeting, the minutes will be available on the website as well.
Volunteer Awards

We are very fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented volunteers who generously give their time to UUCT. Each May we recognize 6 of our many volunteers by awarding them each with a certificate and a beautiful silver chalice pendant, made and donated by Chuck Lundstrom. We received many nominations this year. This year we recognized Margi Magruder, Telin Ghigliotty Sarria, Michael Herman, Sandra Ongley, A.J. Dowgiert, and Cheryl Mennel. Thank you to ALL of our wonderful volunteers – past and present – who help make UUCT our church and our home.

Share the Plate News

Half of all non-pledge income in the offering on May 17th will be shared with the Pan Asian Community Alliance (PACA), which promotes and develops educational and community services for Asians and Pacific Islanders. However, all of their programs, ie, Neighborhood After School Academy, citizenship & immigration classes, interpreter & translation services, cultural community events, etc, are open to all. PACA was nominated for Share the Plate after they helped a UUCT member sign up for a healthcare plan through the Marketplace and provided FREE tax assistance through the VITA program. For more information about PACA, visit their website: http://panasiancommunityalliance.org/
Thank you for your generous support!

Share the Plate is an ongoing social justice activity of our church. Once a month, we share half of all non-pledge income in the offering basket with a local nonprofit whose mission puts into action one or more of our Principles. Since its implementation, Share the Plate has boosted both our income via the offering basket and congregants awareness of local efforts to improve our community. As the name implies, Share the Plate is always split 50-50 between the local charity and our own church. For that reason, we ask that you make checks out to UUCT and write “Share the Plate” in the memo line. Any checks received in the basket on Share the Plate Sunday are understood to be contributions to Share the Plate, not the nonprofit itself. Anyone wishing to make a contribution to a nonprofit should send the check directly to the nonprofit.

UUCT Members and Friends All Art Media and Photography Show

The opening reception for the UUCT Members and Friends All Media show will be on Sunday, May 10th at 11:45 AM in Holland Sanctuary. This year all art media are welcomed and will remain on Holland walls through the summer. Come support the talented artists from our own community. Refreshments will be served. The gallery is also open during church office hours, 9-1 pm Tuesday through Friday and Sunday, 11:30-1 pm. The show runs through Sunday, September 6th.

Photo Directory

We received the photo directory proof from Lifetouch at the end of April. We are making corrections and sending it back to Lifetouch who will then produce the final copies.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline to submit an announcement is the 24th day of the month and the newsletter will be printed and available online the first week of the following month.